

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 003115

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR D, P, EAP, EAP/PMBs, INR/EAP, EAP/PD, EAP/EP

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: A GMA INSIDER GETS OUT

REF: A. MANILA 3093

[1B](#). MANILA 3061

[1C](#). MANILA 2993

Classified By: Political Officer Andrew McClearn for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (S) Summary. The defection from GMA ranks of Congressman Golez is a blow to Arroyo. He believes she has lost the "moral high ground" and civil society support. There are no signs yet of other significant political defections or military unrest, but the situation remains highly fluid. End Summary.

[12](#). (S) Charge met with Representative Roilo Golez on July 7 at the latter's request. Golez, who was Arroyo's National Security Adviser from 2001-04, resigned from Arroyo's coalition party KAMPI and from his position as chair of the House's Committee of National Defense on June 29. At that time, he called on Arroyo to resign.

[13](#). (S) Golez reported that Arroyo's hold on the Senate is now very shaky. He mentioned that Arroyo's control of the body shows signs of shifting, especially with senators such as Ramon Magsaysay Jr., who he characterized as one of several who could be convinced to oppose the President's continuation in power. Once the opposition has a majority, he said, they could make a "sense of the Senate" declaration calling on her to resign. (Note: The Senate would also be the tribunal to convict or acquit her on any impeachment motion that might be approved by the lower House after it resumes on July 25, though Golez believes no impeachment by the House is likely. End Note.)

[14](#). (S) Referring to Arroyo's majority in the House, Golez said the President's reliance on this bloc would further compromise her authority to govern effectively even if she survives. He noted she would be stuck in a vicious downward spiral, beholden to so many special interests and members of the Congress that she would have to give even more favors and do even more questionable things in order to retain her position.

[15](#). (S) Golez stressed to Charge that the current crisis over the legitimacy of the presidency was worse than all other related crises faced by Arroyo since she came to power in [12001](#). He noted that this crisis is distinct from the other three critical moments Arroyo has faced -- EDSA 3 in May 2001, the Oakwood Mutiny in July 2003, and the July 2004 Angelo de la Cruz Iraq hostage affair -- because for the first time she, in her own eyes and in the eyes of the people, no longer has the moral high ground. Using the analogy of racing horses, he said Arroyo is like a thoroughbred -- but one who is now permanently crippled. Vice President Noli de Castro is just a run-of-the-mill horse used to haul wagons. But now, Golez asserted, that run-of-the-mill horse could win the race. In any case, he said the Philippines would do better with De Castro than with Arroyo at this point. Charge underscored that the U.S. supported accountability, but also emphasized the importance of following the Constitution and due process. Golez said that he would only support constitutional measures, which include resignation.

[16](#). (S) Charge noted President Arroyo's tenacity and determination to remain in power, which Golez downplayed for the following three reasons:

-- First, as noted above, he asserted she has lost the moral high ground and therefore lacks the firm conviction she once had of her "mission" to govern the country;

-- Second, her presumption of the role of "civil society" president leaves her much more vulnerable than her predecessor (former president Joseph Estrada) to criticism from powerful and influential sectors such as the Catholic bishops and prominent national universities such as the University of the Philippines, Ateneo, and De La Salle. Estrada, he said, didn't care about what civil society said because he had the masses -- Arroyo does not;

-- Third, she has in the past been worried about violence. During the aborted May 1, 2001, march on the Palace she heard

false reports that a few Filipinos had been shot and she began to panic and almost lost control because of her fear of having caused the deaths.

17. (S) Golez said his pessimistic views on Arroyo's future seem to be shared by many others in high places. Noting that he met with Cardinal Vidal last week, he claimed that Vidal took his hand and commended him for his public stance against Arroyo. Golez also speculated that Arroyo is becoming depressed. Shortly after Golez had publicly called for Arroyo's resignation and resigned from KAMPI on June 29, he claimed the President had called him and said plaintively: "Roi, you have left me already." She was not angry, he noted, but clearly she felt lost, sad and betrayed. Golez finished by noting that his stance is not necessarily a moral one. Rather it is a clear-eyed decision to stay on the side of History. Just as he did in 1986 and 2001, he senses that the days of the person in power are numbered.

18. (S) Comment: Golez's decision to bolt Arroyo's coalition clearly came as a blow to Malacanang. Golez, a U.S. Naval Academy grad, is highly regarded for his policy smarts, although many of his House colleagues resent him believing he is all elbows. So far, none of Golez's colleagues in the pro-Arroyo majority have joined him by calling for her ouster. We are picking up real signs of discontent towards Arroyo in the House and Senate, however, and her grip will loosen further if the controversy continues to swirl. Per ref A, even House Speaker De Venecia, previously a close ally, told Charge of his deep concerns about Arroyo during a July 6 meeting. Golez made a brief reference to some unrest in the military. Mission will be reporting more on this area shortly. At this point, we have no indications of unrest in the senior ranks and no reports of any significant pockets of opposition to Arroyo.

MUSSOMELI